Press release

For Immediate Release

Name, Title, Contact Info

**Mental Health Matters Week**

Mental Health Matters of Lafayette County is excited to announce its fourth annual Mental Health

Matters Week to be hosted countywide Sunday, August 2nd through Friday, August 7th 2020.

What is Mental Health Matters?

* Mental Health Matters of Lafayette County is a nonprofit organization comprised of a large number of community members that have a shared focus on educating others, advocating for individuals in need of support and guidance, reducing the stigma of mental illness, and connecting individuals with mental health resources in our communities and surrounding counties.
* Our group is a subcommittee of the greater Southwest Wisconsin Behavioral Health Partnership, which is a component of the Southwest Wisconsin Community Action Program (SWCAP).
  + SWCAP is one of ten community coalitions in Wisconsin participating in the Healthier Wisconsin Partnership Program’s Strategic Initiative to improve behavioral health. This effort is funded by a grant from the Medical College of Wisconsin.

Who is part of the Mental Health Matters group?

* Our group is made up of anyone who shares in our belief that as a community we need to do everything we can to combat stigma associated with mental health issues and raise awareness about services available to those experiencing mental health challenges. This encompasses a wide variety of community organizations and private citizens, including public health officials, schools and educational institutions, religious organizations, public libraries, family advocates, Human Services, Veteran’s Services, law enforcement and court services, businesses, and more.

What is Mental Health Matters Week?

* The purpose of the upcoming Mental Health Week is to devote a week to educating all community members, including children, on why mental health matters, resources available, and the importance of working together to reduce the stigma and support mental health needs in our individual communities.

What activities are planned?

* Throughout the week there will be numerous activities intended to share information about mental health, reduce stigma and provide opportunities for self-care and connection! This year due to COVID-19 all of our activities will allow for and encourage social distancing.

Sunday, August 2nd:

* Extinguishing Stigma Fire Truck Parade, Darlington, 3pm, view the parade from your porch or your car, see [map](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1sQs07sFHOjLAYIvVcjUiekpYqYrgrNnwhpt-_vfU7SQ/edit?usp=sharing) for route

Monday, August 3rd:

* Share a photo representing positive ways you support your mental health, and post on social media with the hashtag #MHMLafCo. Everyone is welcome to participate, let’s normalize talking about our mental health in order to reduce stigma!

Tuesday, August 4th:

* QPR (Question, Persuade, Refer) suicide prevention training, Zoom virtual training, 2-3:30pm, sign up here <https://form.jotform.com/201886938025059>, QPRis a 90 minute evidence-based training that helps provide community members with the knowledge and basic skills to identify the signs and symptoms of potential suicidal thinking, and to take the first step of intervening and connecting to resources.

Wednesday, August 5th:

* Don't Mask Your Emotions: Roger Reynolds Facebook Live event, 2pm, find the event on our Facebook page @MHMLafayetteCo, We will discuss emotional awareness and taking care of yourself during the COVID-19 pandemic. Topics include isolation, worry, added pressures, navigating differing viewpoints and other stressors.

Thursday, August 6th:

* Kids Yoga in the park, Argyle-Legion Park, 4:00pm, wear comfortable clothes, bring water and a blanket or yoga mat

Friday, August 7th:

* Darlington Police Drive-Through Brat Feed & music by Tom Black in the Gazebo at the Festival Grounds (next to Casey’s along the river), 5-7pm
* Yoga in Shullsburg- Date and Time TBA, check Facebook for details

Does the Mental Health Matters group intend to do more than just this week?

* Yes. The group is here to stay and plans to continue to work to address weaknesses in our mental health system, combat stigma, and increase awareness about services. More needs to be done in our nation to improve access to services and normalize the process. 1 in 5 Americans lives with mental health issues that are treatable. However, far too many are unable to get treatment due to the costs, lack of providers, or simply because they fear being rejected, bullied, or discriminated against. Until everyone realizes mental illness is every bit as normal as physical illness, and deserves the same attention, we will continue in our endeavor.

For more information:

* Please feel free to reach out to Candi Fitzsimons at Johnson Public Library, 608-776-4171. Darlington Police Chief Jason King, 608-776-4981. SWCAP Representative Bridget Mouchon-Humphrey, 608-341-6608.

Social Media:

* Please follow us on Facebook for more information, local resources, and future events. Facebook.com/MHMLafayetteCo
* Please post on Monday and throughout the week using our hashtag #MHMLafCo

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