

West Alabama Mental Health Center introduces new program

By Staff Reports Published 4:05pm Wednesday, November 6, 2013

The West Alabama Mental Health Center will pilot the first Mental Health First Aid program in the Demopolis area.

The agency will train law enforcement officers and members of the general public to help them identify, understand and respond to signs of mental illness. The first training will be held Wednesday, Dec. 4 from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Demopolis Higher Education Center.

"We are thrilled to bring Mental Health First Aid to our community," said Patricia Moore, executive director of the West Alabama Mental Health Center. "This important educational effort goes a lot further than emergency intervention. It really helps people understand the amount of fear and misjudgment facing individuals and families who experience mental illnesses and addiction. It will help rid this community of the associated stigma and move more and more people toward recovery."

The training certification course will teach participants a five-step action plan to assess a situation, select and implement interventions and secure appropriate care for the individual. It will introduce participants to risk factors and warning signs of mental health problems while building an understanding of their impact. The program will also overview common treatments for certain mental illnesses.

"We welcome West Alabama Mental Health Center's involvement and enthusiasm in the Mental Health First Aid community," said Linda Rosenberg, president and CEO of the National Council for Community Behavioral Healthcare. "We know they will have a great impact on the mental health communities throughout West Alabama and will be key players in improving mental health literacy nationwide."

In its pilot year, the Mental Health First Aid program was introduced in nearly 20 states and more than 40 communities across the nation.

For more information, or to participate in Mental Health First Aid training in West Alabama, visit www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org or call Carolyn Morrison, the special projects coordinator, at (334) 289-2410, ext. 20204. The training is limited to 30 participants.