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Robbing bank not best way to get mental health help

Jean Cole 1 hr ago

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You don't have to pretend to rob a bank to get help with mental issues in Limestone County. Although one man tried it Friday afternoon in Athens, there is a better way.

The man, whose name was not released because he has not been charged with a crime, entered Regions Bank at 1101 U.S. 72 East and told a bank teller he had come to "hold up" the bank but he didn't want money, Athens Police Chief Floyd Johnson said. He sat on a bench inside the bank and waited for police. When officers arrived, the man told them he needed to go to a mental hospital but thought he "had to do something" to receive help.

The man was taken by ambulance to Athens-Limestone Hospital for evaluation. Johnson said Monday he checked on the man but was unable to obtain information due to medical privacy law.

The better way

The chief said there are several better ways to seek help with mental health issues.

"People could start with their medical doctor," he said. "I know when we encounter an issue, we always try and involve medical personnel. For some, we recommend they call mental health or other professionals."

The Mental Health Center of North Central Alabama operates outpatient clinics in Limestone, Morgan and Lawrence counties and offers behavioral health care, developmental disabilities services and substance abuse services. To set up an appointment at the MHCNCA, call 256-355-5904 or 800-365-6008. For more information, visit <http://www.mhcnca.org/>.

What it offers

Specifically, the MHCNCA offers the following:

- Psychiatric and mental health services for adults, children and adolescents;
- Adult, child and adolescent psychiatrists who direct the treatment of all clients;
- Licensed, certified social workers, nurses, licensed professional counselors and psychiatrists;
- Counseling at area schools;
- Co-occurring substance abuse treatment and prevention services;
- Services directly to residents of nursing homes, family members and nursing home staff to better equip them to assist people suffering from a mental illness;
- Transitional and permanent housing programs for the clients it serves; and
- Community presentations to educate the public about mental health.

Don't hesitate

Don't ever be afraid to seek help for mental health issues. Most people go through difficult times in their lives and many need assistance to find meaning again or to find their strength again.

MHCNCA statistics show the agency served 508 people in Athens and 142 in the surrounding Limestone County area in July, the chief said.

“Our community has a good number of people suffering from mental health issues,” Johnson said.

“The number isn't a lot compared to the overall population. Each case presents it's own set of issues and problems.”

Most of those are served by the MHCNCA.

“Locally, our mental health professionals do an outstanding job with the tools they have to work with,” Johnson said. “They are hampered by the closing of facilities, budget cuts and red tape, but somehow they find a way to help people in need of help.”

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