

Mental illness needs remain a big issue in Alabama

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Houston County Probate Judge Patrick Davenport took a moment Thursday to shine a spotlight on mental health in Alabama.

In proclaiming May as Mental Health Month, Davenport said mental health patients and their families often suffer more than they otherwise would due to a lack of resources.

“We have a lot of people on the streets that need therapeutic treatment for mental illness,” Davenport said. “We are very fortunate in Houston County to have great partnerships when it comes to mental health treatment and I know we are in a resource strain in every aspect of government, but this is a significant issue.”

As probate judge, Davenport is responsible for overseeing commitment hearings for the mentally ill.

State Rep. Paul Lee, R-Dothan, said Thursday that mental health received additional funds in the most recent general fund budget.

“We realize it is a growing problem,” Lee said. “I know it seems like when money gets tight, this is the first thing that gets cut so we’re glad for the increase.”

According to statistics from the National Alliance on Mental Illness and the National Institute of Mental Health, one in five adults experience a mental illness.

Other statistics from the agencies include:

- » 2.4 million adults live with schizophrenia
- » 6.1 million adults live with bipolar disorder
- » 16 million adults live with major depression
- » 42 million adults live with anxiety disorders

Davenport said the purpose of the proclamation is to increase awareness and understanding in the community about mental illness and the need for appropriate and accessible services.