

January 18, 2002

The Montgomery Advertiser
P.O. Box 1000
Montgomery, AL 36101-1000

Dear Editor,

I read with interest Bill Brown's recent op-ed about teenage suicide and the tragic case of the young flight student in Tampa. I believe both Mr. Brown and *The Advertiser* are to be commended for printing a discussion about such a critically important topic. Currently, the primary cause of suicide in America is untreated depression – a serious form of mental illness that enjoys a treatment success rate higher than that for serious physical illnesses like heart disease.

While suicide is a serious public health problem for adults representing the eighth-leading cause of death in the United States, it is the third-leading cause of death for young people between the ages of 15 and 24, and the fourth-leading cause of death for youth aged 10 to 14 years. Furthermore, from 1980 to 1996, the suicide rate for African-American males aged 15 to 19 years increased by 105 percent. These numbers are entirely too high and indicate that widespread public awareness efforts about teenage suicide are warranted. Parents and guardians, family members, educators, and friends all must learn to recognize the warning signs of suicide.

The National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (NAMI) notes that the following behavioral indicators may indicate the need to seek help from a mental health professional: extreme personality changes; loss of interest in previously enjoyable activities; apparent changes in eating and/or sleeping patterns; persistent fatigue or loss of energy; feelings of worthlessness or guilt; and withdrawal from family and friends. Other signs include neglect of personal appearance or hygiene; feelings of sadness, indifference or irritability; trouble with concentration; drug or alcohol use/abuse; poor school performance; and hallucinations or irrational/unusual beliefs.

I urge all Alabamians to please contact a mental health professional if a young person you know is exhibiting any of these symptoms. Again, I applaud Bill Brown and *The Montgomery Advertiser* for providing this commentary as a valuable public service.

Sincerely,

Kathy E. Sawyer
Commissioner



The Huntsville Times

Your views

Thursday, May 07, 2009

Huntsville Times

Mental health month

As May is Mental Health Awareness month, it is important to keep in mind the stress of so many of our friends and neighbors as they face the challenges of our economy.

At a time when addressing mental health needs is increasingly important, a national study recently found that the majority of primary care physicians could not obtain outpatient mental health treatment for their patients, more than twice the rate of other specialties.

Nationally, community mental health centers are experiencing increasing demands for services while many states are cutting mental health funds, thus reducing services, closing programs, imposing hiring freezes, and cutting or freezing reimbursement rates for providers.

Limiting access to mental health services places additional strain on schools, hospitals, law enforcement, and other aspects of the community. Cutting services results in more patients at costly state mental hospitals, nursing homes, in jails, or on the street.

Access to mental health treatment in Alabama and in Madison County is also severely limited with lengthy waiting times and caseloads so large that patients often cannot be seen as frequently as needed.

As we continue to bail out some of the richest and most powerful corporations, banks and investment brokers, let us not abandon our most vulnerable citizens.

Brian W. Davis,

Huntsville, 35802

Brian Davis is executive director of the Mental Health Center of Madison County.

Act of treason

The statement made by Eric Holder, the attorney general of the United States, that he may cooperate with a Spanish judge who is attempting to prosecute members of the Bush administration is tantamount to treason. This Spanish judge is attempting to violate the sovereignty of the United States, and the attorney general is complicit in this act and should be prosecuted for treason.

We are at war with al-Qaida and other terrorist groups, and the attorney general is, in effect, giving aid and comfort to those groups who are our enemies.

The act of treason would also apply to the release of the CIA memos on so called "torture," in that that act most certainly gave aid and comfort to our enemies. Whether or not the actions taken to provide for the safety of our country were "torture" is based on opinion. If the majority opinion is that the actions taken were not right, then the United States should deal with that quietly and within our own sovereign borders.

It is my opinion that these acts by the Obama administration have done far more damage to the United States than the indiscretions of former President Clinton. I believe these horrific mistakes are grounds for initiating impeachment proceedings against President Obama.

Robert L. Bogard, Madison, 35758