

PRESS RELEASE

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MAY IS NATIONAL MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

A healthy mind and body are key to wellness

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JACKSON (May 14, 2014). May is National Mental Health Awareness Month. LifeWays Community Mental Health and the Jackson Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition are working together to raise awareness of the importance of mental health to an individual's overall health and wellness.

"Maintaining a healthy mind and body is key to overall wellness," said Heather English, Prevention and Wellness Coordinator at LifeWays Community Mental Health and member of the Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition. "This month, we encourage our community to learn about the steps they can take to care for their mental health so they can respond to the stress of daily life and the challenges it presents."

The goal of National Mental Health Awareness Month is to raise awareness about mental health conditions and its importance for everyone. To help achieve that goal, Mental Health America has developed a series of fact sheets (available at: mentalhealthamerica.net/may) on steps anyone can take to improve their overall mental health and well-being and on how to get help when needed. These fact sheets include:

- Alcohol Use and Abuse
- Building Social Support
- Supplements: Weighing Benefits and Risks
- Getting Help (signs help is needed, types of providers, etc.)
- Stress: Coping with Everyday Problems
- Rest, Relaxation and Exercise
- Healthy Diet: Eating with Mental Health in Mind

"When a person has 'good' mental health, they are better equipped to navigate life changes and overcome obstacles," English said. "By contrast, 'poor' mental health—such as feeling overwhelmed by stress—can make day-to-day life difficult, and oftentimes, people use substances to help them cope." Research shows that stress is closely linked to high blood pressure, heart disease, and obesity and that people who feel depressed or chronically stressed may have a greater risk of substance use disorders and physical illnesses.

The good news is that there are many healthy choices and steps that individuals can adopt to promote and strengthen their mental health—and their overall health and well-being. Building social support, eating with your mental health in mind, and stress management are important steps that promote good mental health. "Just as we have learned there are things we can do to reduce our risk of heart disease and chronic illnesses, we want to help people learn what they can do both to protect their mental health in tough times and also to improve mental well-being throughout their lives," according to English.

More information about:

- Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition and its activities, please contact Amy Swartz at (517) 796-5131 or via email at aswartz@uwjackson.org
- LifeWays CMH, please contact Heather English at (517) 796-4533 or via email at heather.english@lifewayscmh.org

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