Suicide Coalition Launches Mental Health Campaign for Men

The Lewis and Clark Suicide Prevention Coalition, spearheaded by Lewis and Clark Public Health, today announced the launch of a new campaign to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health for working-aged men.

The coalition will use Man Therapy™, an approach that uses humor to cut through stigma and tackle issues like depression, divorce, and suicidal thoughts head-on.

In addition to the anti-stigma campaign, the coalition is scheduling a series of events and activities to help men improve their mental health by connecting with new friends and learning about different hobbies and outlets available to them. The first event will be a kick-off party on Sept. 28, 5-8 p.m., at Lewis and Clark Brewery. The event is free and open to the public.

Man Therapy, online at www.mantherapy.org, gives men and the people who care about them a place to go to learn more about men’s mental health. Visitors can assess their own mental health and consider an array of actions that can put them on the path to treatment and recovery.

“When you go the website, you meet Dr. Rich Mahogany, a character created to help visitors feel at ease,” said Jess Hegstrom, an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer who co-leads the coalition and is spearheading the campaign. “Dr. Mahogany is a man’s man who is dedicated to cutting through the denial with a fresh approach using his odd sense of humor, straightforward approach, and practical, useful advice for men. His goal is to debunk the age-old stigma that says mental health disorders are an unmanly sign of weakness.”

Man Therapy initially launched in Colorado in 2012 and has since been adopted in several states, as well as internationally.
“This campaign goes beyond just awareness to really engage men and draw them into the conversation,” said Drenda Niemann, health officer at Lewis and Clark Public Health. “We feel it’s critical to bring this tool here to reach both men and their loved ones. With Man Therapy, you can learn how to improve your mental health using techniques ranging from do-it-yourself activities to professional therapy and resources.”

The coalition has chosen to focus its campaign on men because statistics show they’re the population in the county most at risk of dying by suicide, Niemann said.

In 2016 and 2017, for example, 25 men died by suicide compared to 6 women, according to data compiled by the county coroner. Fourteen of those men were between the ages of 20 and 65.

For more information about the coalition and its campaign, contact Drenda Niemann at 457-8910 or dniemann@lccountymt.gov or Jess Hegstrom at 406-830-7439 or jhegstrom@ehps.k12.mt.us.