Suicide Coalition to Celebrate Success of Man Therapy Campaign with Community Party

For the past year, local suicide prevention advocates have tried to tickle men’s funny bones through Man Therapy, a mental health, anti-stigma campaign aimed at working-aged men in Lewis and Clark County.

Now, they’re gearing up for a community shindig to celebrate the progress of the campaign in helping men recognize that talking about mental health and seeking help are “manly.”

“As the Man Therapy Campaign so boldly states, ‘you can’t just rub some dirt on your emotions’ and ‘you can’t fix your mental health with duct tape,’” said Jess Hegstrom, suicide prevention coordinator at Lewis and Clark Public Health (LCPH). “The fact that more men in our community know that embracing their mental health will lead to healthier, happier lives is something worth celebrating.”

The Man Therapy End-of-Year Bash will be Friday, Sept. 6, from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Helena Family YMCA, 1200 N. Last Chance Gulch. The family-friendly event will feature food trucks, important announcements for the future of the program, as well as free sessions of dodgeball, pickle ball, and yoga. The coalition will finally give away the “Ultimate Man Package,” a raffle prize a year in the making for men who participated in the campaign’s Guys’ Night Out series of events.

The bash will also serve as a kick-off for the newest chapter of Team RWB, a veteran service organization that brings together veterans, service members and civilians through fitness and service opportunities. Learn more about this organization at www.teamrwb.org.
Man Therapy initially launched in Colorado in 2012 and has since been adopted in several states, as well as internationally. However, Lewis and Clark County is the only Montana participant. The campaign features Dr. Rich Mahogany, a fictitious doctor who helps put men at ease, especially when they visit www.ManTherapy.org, which is the heart of the campaign.

Through the website, visitors can take a mental health survey to measure their mental well-being and learn more about common challenges, such as anger, substance use, depression and anxiety. The site also helps them consider an array of actions that can put them on the path to better mental health, treatment and recovery.

Since starting the campaign in September 2018, more than 2,500 local people have visited the website, almost 650 completed a mental health assessment, and 57 accessed the “red phone,” which connects them to the Suicide Prevention Lifeline.

“That means that the site and this effort has potentially saved more than 50 lives,” Hegstrom noted. “I’m really proud of the coalition’s work on this campaign and hope to see similar results well into the future for our guys.”

In addition to the anti-stigma effort, the coalition offered a series of “Guys’ Night Out” events to help men improve their mental health by connecting with new friends and activities. Those were made possible by many of the campaign’s 116 business partners throughout the county.

“Man Therapy has been a great program that is both enlightening and fun,” said Brandon Cooper, a Guys’ Night Out participant. “It definitely helped me at a dark time of my life.

“Don't let the ‘therapy’ in Man Therapy scare you away,” he added. “It's about knowing that you are not alone here and can come together with strangers to find new interests and have fun.”

Hegstrom said she is grateful for the program’s progress and the generous participation of many local businesses.

“We’re excited to celebrate our first year of the Man Therapy Campaign,” she said. “We’ve had a great response from the community and are confident that this effort is helping to address stigma and raise awareness around mental health.

“You might be seeing Dr. Rich Mahogany around for another year.”

For more information about the Suicide Prevention Coalition and the Man Therapy Campaign, contact Hegstrom at 457-8970 or jhegstrom@lccountymt.gov. Or visit www.lcsuicideprevention.org.

If you or someone you know is struggling, please call the Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1(800) 273-8255. Call 911 if the person is in immediate danger.