

NEWS RELEASE

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Commissioners Proclaim Mental Health Month

(WHITE TOWNSHIP, NJ – May 12, 2021) – The Warren County Board of County Commissioners proclaimed May as Mental Health Month, noting that all county residents can make a difference to help end the silence and stigma surrounding mental illness.

One in five Americans lives with a diagnosed mental health condition affecting family, friends, classmates, neighbors and coworkers, the commissioners noted in their proclamation, which also states that the Warren County Mental Health Board, in partnership with the County of Warren, is committed to raising awareness of prevention and treatment of mental illness and supporting community-based programs that serve county residents.

County Commissioner Jason J. Sarnoski remarked that while the county issues a proclamation every year, it is particularly important in 2021. “With COVID defining our lives right now, and making it so difficult for those with mental health conditions to seek and get treatment and help, it’s so important to recognize those struggles and support those in our community seeking help and to make sure they have access to those services,” he said.

Striving to be a stigma-free community while also offering addiction programs and services are important endeavors and tied into mental health as well, Sarnoski said as he thanked the Warren County Human Services Department and Mental Health Board members for the work they do.

“Over the years, definitely over the



Aaron Hyndman, who chairs the Warren County Mental Health Board, receives the Mental Health Month proclamation from County Commissioners Jason J. Sarnoski, Lori Ciesla, and Director James R. Kern III.

decades, the stigma around mental health has definitely decreased,” County Commissioner Lori Ciesla said. “It’s not completely gone yet, and we do need to continue to work on that, because there shouldn’t be any stigma attached to any mental issues or addiction issues,” she said, adding, “We’re all here to help each other and do the very best we can.”

Ciesla joined Sarnoski in thanking the Human Services Department and Mental Health Board, noting, “There’s so much out there, and our county does so much to get that information to people, so that they can get the help they need.” Coming out of the pandemic will be difficult for people, but Ciesla said she was confident that help would be available for the residents of Warren County.

With respect to stigma, Commissioner Director James R. Kern III agreed with both of his colleagues. “I think one of the most impactful things that this board can do with respect to a proclamation is bring light and have conversation about something in a public forum like this,” he said.

There should be no reluctance to have discussions about mental health, Kern said, adding, “We’re talking about our friends, family, neighbors – it affects all of us.”

Kern noted the pandemic prevented people from having contact with others and seeking treatment. He said the County Commissioners would continue to work to make sure resources are available despite difficult funding cuts from the state. “We’re all being affected by this, and know that this board will always be supportive of mental health,” Kern said.

Aaron Hyndman expressed gratitude to County Commissioners as he accepted the proclamation on behalf of the Warren County Mental Health Board, which he chairs, and the county Human Services Department. “Issuing proclamations like this is a huge, huge catalyst to breaking down stigma. And when we defeat stigma, we save lives and livelihoods,” Hyndman said.

Mental health issues when untreated also have a debilitating effect on people economically, Hyndman said, adding that efforts like those of the County Commissioners help to build a stronger Warren County.

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MENTAL HEALTH MONTH

MAY 2021

WHEREAS, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health, including the trauma of a public health pandemic like COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, one in five Americans lives with a diagnosed mental health condition affecting our family, friends, classmates, neighbors and coworkers; and

WHEREAS, death by suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the United States and second leading cause of death for 10 to 24 year olds; and

WHEREAS, more than 9 million adults have a co-occurring mental illness and addiction disorders; and

WHEREAS, with effective identification and treatment, individuals with mental health conditions can recover and lead full, productive lives; and

WHEREAS, all Warren County residents can make a difference to help end the silence and stigma surrounding mental illness, and to encourage compassion and support; and

WHEREAS, the Warren County Mental Health Board, in partnership with the County of Warren, is committed to raising awareness of prevention and treatment of mental illness and supporting community-based programs that serve Warren County residents.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Warren County Board of County Commissioners does hereby proclaim May 2021 as Mental Health Month.

James R. Kern III, Director
Jason J. Sarnoski, Deputy Director
Lori Ciesla, Commissioner
Warren County Board of County Commissioners