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OPEN ACCESS MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES NOW AVAILABLE IN FAYETTE

Uniontown, PA – In an effort to better serve Fayette County citizens, Chestnut Ridge Counseling Services has introduced its first Open Access program designed to offer urgent-care mental health services.

Chestnut Ridge Chief Executive Officer Mike Quinn said that 20 percent of all people have experienced mental health issues that would benefit from support and treatment by a professional therapist or psychiatrist.

“Prior to Open Access, individuals may have waited two weeks or more to see a therapist for an initial discussion of what was influencing (their) lives,” Quinn said. “Open Access allows anyone in need of mental health intervention to walk in anytime during most hours of operation.

“Open Access is like urgent care for when you need to talk to someone and may be feeling depressed or anxious.”

Quinn said Open Access is available to new patients, while existing patients must schedule appointments with their regular doctors. He said, when it comes to mental health treatment, “the sooner the better” is ideal.

“You have to be able to strike while the iron’s hot when someone realizes they really need help,” he said. “That immediate access has helped increase the number of individuals who show up for their intake appointments.”

Fayette County Commissioners issued a proclamation last week declaring May 2018 Mental Health Awareness Month in Fayette County, acknowledging that mental illness does not discriminate and affects millions worldwide.

Whereas living with mental illness can be exhausting and challenging, they encouraged all residents to help remove the stigma associated with those disorders and their treatment.

“It’s wonderful that Chestnut Ridge is offering a walk-in service,” Commissioner Dave Lohr said. “I can see huge benefits from this.”



Lohr said increased access to mental health services may help prevent possible attacks on others, including mass shootings.

“Who knows? If a service like this was available and used, maybe it could have made a difference and saved lives (in those situations),” Lohr said.

Commissioner Vincent Vicites said it’s “important that we as county commissioners promote the awareness and the need for mental health services in Fayette County.”

Vicites said mental illness can be treated and those properly diagnosed can “live a good life.”

“Faster, better treatment options are very important,” he said. “Trying new concepts and treatment approaches are vital and our goal is to improve the lives of all citizens in Fayette County.”

“Having treatment options available to meet the needs of mental health patients can only help to better serve their needs,” Commissioner Angela Zimmerlink said.

As Fayette County’s largest mental wellness treatment provider, Chestnut Ridge has outpatient offices in Uniontown, 100 New Salem Rd., and Connellsville, 1051 Morrell Ave.

Since instituting the Open Access program at those locations, Quinn said, patient numbers have increased by 20 percent.

“More individuals have been able to get the help they need to address their issues and move forward with a plan to get back to goals and activities they enjoy,” Quinn said.

For more information, call Chestnut Ridge Counseling Services at 724-437-0729, visit www.crcsi.org or stop by any location.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.info.

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