

## Mental health concerns a priority

Community Memorial Foundation is committed to building healthier communities. Established in 1995, the foundation is anchored by its bold vision of transforming the western suburbs into the healthiest region in the country. Advancing this vision means that all of our neighbors feel that good health and mental well-being are within their reach.

Mental and behavioral health concerns continue to be a priority for our community and the nation at large. From first responders to local pastors, the foundation's colleagues and neighbors have consistently voiced a growing need for mental health awareness. In our role as listener, the foundation heard the community's call to action and responded with a series of initiatives that maximize community resources and solidify the foundation's role as a convener and catalyst for change:

- **Mental Health Roundtable**

Spurred by the events at Sandy Hook Elementary, Community Memorial Foundation formed the Mental Health Roundtable — a group of cross-sector community leaders who meet on a quarterly basis to address mental health needs in a coordinated manner.

- **Mental Health First Aid Training**

In 2013, the foundation and its partners initiated Mental Health First Aid Training within our community. Similar to training individuals in CPR or First Aid, this program certifies participants to identify, understand and respond to symptoms of mental illness. To date, nearly 1,000 people have been certified locally.

- **Suicide prevention video**

The foundation is in the initial stages of developing a suicide prevention



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video with the assistance of area youth who will help create and communicate this important message.

- **Grant funding**  
The foundation continues to invest in services that cultivate family and peer support and counseling services for those impacted by mental illness.

By partnering across multiple sectors — with nonprofits, businesses, other funders, faith-based organizations, health systems and service clubs — the foundation hopes to address local needs in a collaborative and thoughtful way. The implementation of these and other local initiatives proactively addresses the stigmas associated with mental illness and promote the recognition that mental, behavioral and physical health are interconnected.

The foundation's work is inspired by those individuals who experience depression, suicide and self-injury and those organizations who help them; it is our desire to express a message of hope to all who are experiencing mental illness in our community. The National Alliance for Mental Illness has a tagline that is worth repeating: "NAMI understands your challenges and is there for you." It is in this same spirit that we invite you to share this message of hope with your families, friends and colleagues. We at the foundation pledge to continue to promote mental health awareness and support; together we can build a healthier and stronger community.

— *Greg DiDomenico is president and CEO of Community Memorial Foundation in Hinsdale. Readers can email him at [news@thehinsdalean.com](mailto:news@thehinsdalean.com).*