



HELP & HOPE

MONTCALM & IONIA
COUNTIES

**A mental health resource guide in partnership with
Montcalm Care Network, The Right Door for Hope, Recovery and
Wellness and the Daily News**

DAILY NEWS

VIEW *Newspaper* Group

January 30, 2021

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County Residents,

On behalf of Montcalm Care Network and The Right Door for Hope, Recovery and Wellness, we are pleased to partner with The Daily News to bring you this information-packed resource guide aimed at giving hope and providing help.

As the designated Community Mental Health Services Programs in each county, together with our staff, we strive to provide behavioral health services that treat the whole person: mind, body and spirit. Our services are rooted in the values of quality, accessible care, healing, wellness and recovery for all. And with a focus on the principles of Person/Family Centered Treatment planning, we ensure every individual served has hope for today, tomorrow and the future.







There is no doubt 2020 had been a difficult year. At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, our

essential behavioral health services quickly shifted to telehealth so we could safely support people in our communities without missing a beat. Our staff distributed data tablets, prepaid phones cards, and sought ways to get more homes connected to the internet. We worked harder than ever with our community partners to find new and innovative ways to support people in addressing their mental health needs. And as the community safety net, we remained vigilant in our responsibilities to respond 24/7 to mental health crises; intervening to keep people safe and prevent psychiatric hospitalizations.

Undoubtedly the pandemic has been a difficult time. We've seen this in our own services with people needing more intensive services since the onset of COVID-19. Unfortunately, even though

the pandemic has forced isolation and hardships, fewer people are using the services our mental health agencies offer. At the same time, a larger proportion of people are being admitted to psychiatric hospitals who had not previously received mental health services. There is a need and our agencies, along with all mental health providers in our communities, are ready and waiting to help.

As community members we need to actively seek out opportunities to support one another in making mental health a priority. We must allow ourselves to accept help when it's needed and share stories

Trends since the onset of COVID-19:		
	Increased needs requiring more intensive mental health services	
	Fewer people requesting to receive mental health services	
	Higher proportion of psychiatric hospitalizations for those not already receiving mental health services	

of how our lives have improved as a result of that help. By sharing our experiences openly and supporting others in times of mental wellness and mental unwellness, then together we are building a healthier community.

We encourage you to save this guide, share it with others, and join us in giving help and hope to all those living in our communities.

SIX STEPS TO BETTER MENTAL HEALTH:

- **Stay Connected:** Keep in touch with family and friends.
- **Manage Stress:** Take time each day to digitally unplug, connect with yourself.
- **Stay Active:** Commit to daily or weekly exercise time.
- **Eat Healthy:** Strive to eat more vegetables, drink more water or limit sugar/caffeine.
- **Get Quality Sleep:** Set a regular bedtime and find ways to wind down each night.
- **Accept Help:** You are not alone. There is always help and there is always hope.

Best wishes,



Tammy J. Warner

Tammy J. Warner



Executive Director
Montcalm Care Network
Serving Residents of Montcalm County



Kerry Possehn

Kerry Possehn



Chief Executive Officer
The Right Door for Hope, Recovery and Wellness
Serving Residents of Ionia County

Key to Resilience:

Self Care and Ask for Help

We often hear the phrase “these are unprecedented times.” One only needs to turn on the TV or check social media to be bombarded with messages of illness, fear, disaster and unrest. This can affect our day-to-day functioning, especially living in a pandemic and time of social unrest. Patterns of repeat exposure to high



JULIANNA KOZARA
Clinical Director,
Montcalm Care Network

levels of distress with a limited or poor ability to cope is referred to as “toxic stress.” This can result in fatigue, depression, anxiety and

a negative impact on physical health.

Resilience is defined as the ability to recover from adversity by effectively adapting and growing. The good news is we can develop resiliency. We can also help grow our community’s ability to support resilient citizens.

In times of stress, feeling out of control is a normal response. But there also are simple, intentional actions - such as self-care - that we can follow to keep us grounded:

- **Eat healthy foods, get good sleep, stay physically active:** These basic building blocks of self-care can be a remedy for mild depression and anxiety by boosting our natural endorphins, which are the chemicals in our body that contribute to motivation, energy and an increased sense of wellbeing. Taking basic care of ourselves builds our immune systems and increases our positive emotions

like joy, contentment and calm. With these our brains are better prepared to problem-solve the challenges thrown at us.

- **Avoid overuse of substances:** During times of stress, turning to substances in an effort to produce this feel-good sensation is tempting. Our brain is tricked into a temporary high that gets harder and harder to reach with continued use. Take stock of how much alcohol, drugs or marijuana you are using and replace them with self-care strategies.
- **Know your limits:** Slow down, avoid taking on one more project, unplug from social media for a few hours.
- **Know when to ask for help:** Many resources exist in our community to provide support. Counseling can help when depression or anxiety don’t seem to lift after a couple weeks and when negative thoughts prevail.
- **Be part of the solution:** Helping others can boost our own wellbeing and improve our community. While it’s more difficult when we have to stand 6 feet apart and wear masks, it is possible. Community resilience is built one personal interaction after another through the patience and kindness we show each other: a simple “thank you” to a local grocery store clerk, saying a kind word to others even when we’re frustrated, volunteering. We can connect through church groups, social clubs, community classes and online events. Putting our

Resources:

Need Help?

Call Michigan Stay Well Counseling at 1-888-535-6136, then press 8. It’s free and available 24/7.

Want to volunteer?

Call the United Way Volunteer Center to find out about local opportunities at 616-794-9840. Or get involved with the Montcalm Trauma Champions Network or Ionia County STARRS, both of which focus on building community resilience.

For information email:

Esther at ecombs@maisd.com or Jim at jloswer@ioniaisd.org.

energies into others takes us outside of our own troubles and creates a sense of meaning during a time we might struggle to make sense of what is occurring in the world.

Building resilience doesn’t take heroic actions or efforts, but we all have an opportunity to be heroes in our community by taking small steps each day. In the words of Dr. Mollie Marti of the National Resilience Institute, “Resilience is not about gritting your teeth and getting through or sucking it up. Resilience is about honoring our need to ask for and receive help.”

Your Mental Health Is Important To Us!

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for hope, recovery and wellness

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Crisis Line: 888-527-1790

Visit: www.rightdoor.org

Locations in:
Ionia, Belding and Portland



 **montcalm**
care network

FOR CHILDREN AND ADULTS
OF MONTCALM COUNTY

Call: 989-831-7520

Crisis Line: 800-377-0974

Visit or Chat: www.montcalmcare.net

Locations in:
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DEALING with ANXIETY and DEPRESSION:

Tips and tricks

These are times of uncertainty — when our routines are disrupted, our lives feel like they are no longer our own. Isolation, loneliness and fear can lead to anxiety and depression.

Brenda Demenov and Michelle Spicer have lived with both. Each has been hospitalized in the past and sought mental health services: Demenov from the Montcalm Care Network and Spicer from The Right Door for Hope, Recovery and Wellness. Today both are certified peer support specialists with the state of Michigan and provide direct services to others on their recovery journey.

Demenov and Spicer shared some tools they suggest to their clients and that they themselves use to deal with

anxiety and depression.

“Even though (the techniques) work with individuals that might have severe persistent mental illness,

they’re practical kinds of things that work for any of us,” said Julianna Kozara, licensed master’s social worker and clinical director of Montcalm Care Network.

- **Distract.** Something as simple as playing games on a cellphone or coloring in an adult coloring book can distract the mind from loneliness or worry.
- **Exercise.** Even if it’s just a walk around the block, get up and move.
- **Go outside.** Fresh air and time in nature - even for a few minutes - can help.
- **Count backwards.** When racing thoughts keep Demenov from falling asleep, she starts at 100 and subtracts by three to refocus her mind.
- **Connect** where you can on Zoom,

“When you get there, it’s such a great feeling, but it takes practice.”

Brenda Demenov

FaceTime or other platforms. “It’s nice to hear someone on the phone, but being able to see somebody’s face brightens the day for someone,” Demenov said.

- **Focus on your breath.** Breathe in deeply through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. Or try “square breathing,” a method of counting your breath while imagining drawing a square: breathe in-2-3-4 and out-2-3-4.
- **Try a visualization.** Imagine sitting by a river. Notice a leaf floating by. Let your mind and your thoughts follow the leaf.
- **Write out an affirmation** and hang it up where you can see it. Perhaps “My life is good,” or “All is well in my world,” or “I am safe.”
- **Opposite action.** Identify the feeling you have at the moment and do the opposite. If you’re sad, watch a happy movie. “That helps your emotion shift over time,” Kozara said.
- **Check the facts.** The unknown can be scary. Educate yourself on what is making you fearful.
- **When anxiety strikes, STOP:** Stop. Take a moment. Observe the situation. Proceed with kindness to yourself. “If we can catch it — identify that we have moved away

from the space where we want to be, and check it, we can change it,” said Spicer.

- **Self-sooth.** Be kind to yourself. Take a bubble bath, soak your feet in hot water, light your favorite candle, listen to your favorite music.
- **Make a relaxation kit for the five senses.** Demenov’s contains things that remind her of the beach, like coconut ChapStick (smell), and a CD with sounds of ocean waves (hearing). Using the five senses “helps create a sense of comfort and calm when you’re anxious or depressed,” Kozara said.
- **Grow an indoor garden.** Spicer looked for something alive that she had to give attention to. She found it in plants. “It’s helped me remember that this (time) is just a growing process,” she said.
- **Do something for someone else.** Make an extra lasagna and take it to a neighbor. Clean out your closets and donate where you see a need in the community.

These tools won’t necessary “fix” the anxiety or depression, especially not immediately, said Kozara.

“Sometime when we teach people a coping skill, they may try it briefly and say, ‘Well, that didn’t help,’” she said. “But it isn’t necessarily about fixing the problem; it’s increasing our ability to tolerate it, to move through it.”

“When you get there, it’s such a great feeling,” Demenov added. “But it takes practice.”



KAREN BOTA

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GETTING A COVID-19 VACCINE IS IMPORTANT

Our physical health can affect our mental health. When you're sick or don't feel good, it's hard to stay positive and take care of yourself. This is why the COVID-19 vaccine is important.



To schedule your vaccine, visit michigan.gov/covidvaccine and click on the county where you live.

NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE
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suicidpreventionlifeline.org

"What mental health needs is more sunlight, more candor, and more unashamed conversation."

— Glenn Close

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Supporting Students: Handle With Grace

Mental health services have become imperative during the pandemic.

From the lens of a school-based mental health services provider, we are seeing an increase in symptoms of depression and anxiety among students. This can look like anger, disorganization, lack of interest in favorite activities, change in sleeping or eating patterns and a lack of motivation.

Uncertain times and a longing for academic success in untraditional

learning environments is causing increased stressors for our education system as a whole and our students directly. Since

the start of the pandemic, our students have had fewer opportunities for social connection, combined with a decrease in structured support through school. This does not allow students as much space to process current events and challenges, as well as successes that are happening day to day for them. All of this affects our students as they continue to move toward learning and academic success.

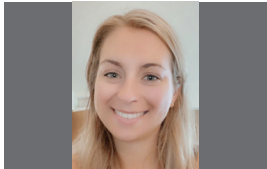
We encourage all adults working with a student in the role of parent, teacher, administrator, or in any capacity to please handle them with grace:

- Students are giving what they can give in this challenging time. It might look different than their effort prior to pandemic.
- Continue to encourage growth by validating their attempts to com-

plete tasks, offering compliments, pointing out strengths and providing routine.

- Encourage movement, fresh air and time away from a screen.
- Listen and offer moments to comment and process feelings.

Challenges face parents and educators during these uncertain times, too, and providing support to these adults is needed as well. Adults in the lives of students are being asked to step up in extraordinary ways and our community is so thankful for the dedication. We value and appreciate our hard-working educational community. We are all in a constant state of adaptation, which can be exhausting, but it leads to the opportunity to grow alongside our students.



ADDIE ZEMCIK

School Outreach Specialist
Montcalm Care Network



**MONTCALM AREA
INTERMEDIATE
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Students in need of mental health support services or who are experiencing homelessness, poverty or trauma, are encouraged to reach out to their school counselor to learn about available school resources.

Montcalm Area ISD:

Supporting our students and families through our school and community partnerships

Serving the districts of Carson City–Crystal ♦ Central Montcalm ♦ Greenville Lakeview ♦ Montabella ♦ Tri County ♦ Vestaburg ♦ Flat River Academy

621 New Street ♦ Stanton MI 48888 ♦ www.maisd.com

Resource:

If your student needs help:

The Montcalm Area Intermediate School District and Montcalm Care Network have a partnership to support the students of our county. Utilizing Michigan Department of Education funding through 31N, four master’s level mental health clinicians are assigned to provide support to students in each of Montcalm County’s school districts. The 31N funding is designed to expand mental health resources, support and programming to students at no cost to families, regardless of health insurance coverage. The 31N Mental Health Liaisons provide brief individual sessions, groups, community referrals and programming. They work to help students with enhanced academic achievement, school participation and overall school performance through the promotion of mental health and wellness. This is the second school year of bringing together school districts and community partners. **If you believe your student might benefit from working with one of these liaisons, please reach out to your local school’s administrative office.**

In a Kaiser Family Foundation Poll taken in July 2020 on the implications of COVID-19 on mental health and substance use, 53 percent of adults in the United States reported that their mental health has been negatively impacted due to worry or stress over the coronavirus. This is significantly higher than the 32 percent reported in March 2020.



If you’re struggling with your mental health, **YOU ARE NOT ALONE.** The biggest thing you can do to improve your mental health is talk to someone about how you are feeling. A friend, family member or counselor if needed. You don’t need to feel the way you do. There are lots of people willing to listen.



WORKING TOGETHER TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE WHOLE CHILD.
The Greenville Public Schools Staff and Board of Education

Please contact your child’s school for available support for student mental health concerns.

Social Work, Counseling and other services available.

- Baldwin Heights: 616.754.3643
- Cedar Crest: 616.754.3641
- Lincoln Heights: 616.754.9167
- Walnut Hills: 616.754.3688
- Greenville Middle School: 616.754.9361
- Greenville High School: 616.754.3681

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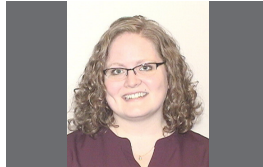
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277120

Helping Our Youth:

Spectrum Health Partners with Area Schools to Help with Mental Health Services

Considering the word “pandemic” was Merriam-Webster’s 2020 Word of the Year, there is no doubt you’re feeling a certain level of mental fatigue. We’re tasked with “finding our new normal” amidst virtual-everything and cancelled events. Just as most of us, our youth are feeling similar stress COVID-19 drags on. This is clear as the number of young adults accessing mental health services at the Spectrum Health Lakeview Youth Clinic is up nearly 20 percent this year over the previous year. Our youth are experiencing worry, stress, sadness, sleep trouble, anger, low motivation, feeling isolated and hopelessness.



LACEY JONES
LMSW
Spectrum Health
Lakeview Youth Clinic



Here’s how adults can help:

- Adults should express interest in youth by listening to worries or frustrations and answering questions. Simple validation is often all it takes.
- Families might try refocusing on wellness by spending extra time together. Exercising, learning and making a new healthy recipe together, placing attention on gratitude or counting blessings, keeping a consistent sleep schedule, and having movie or game nights. Try incorporating some mindfulness, yoga, or meditation into family routines (Pro tip: Netflix has a series by Headspace on meditation).
- Attempt to stay in the moment by limiting COVID-19 related information to only necessary updates from verified sources.
- Teach healthy boundaries by showing it is okay to take a pause when feeling overwhelmed.

If you know a young adult who is struggling, help is available. Spectrum Health partners with multiple high schools in Montcalm County offering telemedicine with a licensed social worker. Check with your school counselors to see if this is available in your district. If you prefer in-person appointments, call Spectrum Health Lakeview Youth Clinic at (989) 352-1800. The clinic is grant funded and available to anyone age 10 to 21 offering mental and health care services regardless of ability to pay.

Here when you need us.



Lakeview Youth Clinic

The Lakeview Youth Clinic offers services designed to meet the needs of 10 to 21 year-olds.

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- Health education
- Illness and injury treatment
- Life skills and goal setting
- Relationship, interpersonal, school and behavioral issues
- Patient advocacy with outside agencies
- Referrals to specialized physicians, mental health professionals and dentists

*Michigan law requires that some services be offered to teens privately. If there is any situation that could result in harm to themselves or others, or if someone is hurting them, our staff will report the situation as required by law.

Call us today at **989.352.1800**

spectrumhealth.org/lakeview-youth-clinics

420 Lincoln Avenue
Lakeview, MI 48850



Spectrum Health
United and Kelsey Hospitals

WARNING SIGNS FOR DEPRESSION AND SUICIDE

Did you know that 1/3 of all depressed people attempt suicide and that suicide is the 3rd leading cause of DEATH among 10-24 year olds?

If someone you know is suffering five or more of these symptoms for over a two-week period of time, he/she may be suffering from **DEPRESSION**.

CONSULT A PHYSICIAN IMMEDIATELY!



IS YOUR CHILD, TEEN, OR LOVED ONE EXPERIENCING ANY OF THESE SIGNS?

- Feeling sad
- Change of appetite
- Loss of interest in activities
- Difficulty sleeping or sleeping too much
- Energy loss or fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Feeling helpless and hopeless
- Risk-taking behavior
- Extreme withdrawal from friends & family
- Giving away favorite possessions
- Neglecting school work
- Stomach aches, headaches

**NATIONAL
SUICIDE HOTLINE
1-800-273-TALK (8255)**

Parents *Can* Find Balance **During a Pandemic**

The pressure and stress of balancing everything can be taxing on parents in the best of times. Having conversations about how we achieve balance and getting creative in how we handle our current culture has never been more important. The demands of the pandemic, shifting school platforms, working from home or outside the home challenges parents' capacity to do it all.

As a parent with first-hand experience navigating public systems and raising my children with mental



SHANNAN KOOISTRA
Parent Support Partner
Montcalm Care Network

health and developmental challenges, I have learned strategies to help keep on track. In my work as a

Parent Support Partner at Montcalm Care Network, my focus is helping parents and caregivers increase their confidence and find their voice when they partner with professionals serving their children. All parents do best when empowered to develop sustainable, natural support networks and practical skill sets. When parents experience a greater connection to their community, they find hope in the future for their children and for themselves as a caregiver.

There are skills parents can use to lessen negative symptoms of the pandemic such as anxiety, depression and isolation. Here are some practical ones that work both for my family, as well as those I serve:

- **Shift your focus:** Be as mindful as possible and avoid focusing on the negative. That means decreasing your use of social media because it can negatively affect

mental health by causing anxiety, depression and isolation. Instead, set boundaries for how you interact on social media and limit times of access. Make sure you are modeling this behavior of tuning off technology for your children.

- **Take care of yourself as a Parent/Caregiver:** With everyone being at home, this is more of a challenge than ever before. Plan extra self-care activities such as breathing techniques, reading inspirational quotes, setting a reminder on your phone of positive affirmations, creating a safe place in your home that is just for relaxation, or getting physically active inside or outside.

- **Find activities to do as a family:** These activities don't have to be elaborate or cost money for families to have a great time together. There are numerous activities that can be done both in the home, as well as safely in the community. Attend a virtual event, have a game night, organize a scavenger hunt inside or outside, make crafts together - just to name a few. In the community, the library is a great resource with curbside to-go bags of crafts, games, books and snacks.

- **Ask for help:** It is okay to admit that this is a difficult time. Being resilient means being able to quickly recover from the difficulties that life offers. No one is immune to what is going on with the pandemic. Even with a support system of friends, family and resources, we all have our moments of need.

There is not a specific recipe for balancing it all during this time, just like there is no handbook on parenting. But trying new techniques, activities, ways to do things can make all the difference in navigating through these times for your child and for you.



ALPHA

Family Services
of GREENVILLE

705 N. Hillcrest Street, Greenville, MI 48838
Please call 616-225-2265 or 616-302-6060
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 - Court Ordered Parenting Classes
- **Surrendering the Secret**
 - Support to help bring healing from the emotional pain caused by having an abortion.

7 Signs of a Mental Health Condition

Mental illness doesn't discriminate. A mental health condition can affect anyone regardless of age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity or gender.

MOLLY MCCOY

Director of Sales & Client Services
East Region at Priority Health

The numbers are staggering. The National Alliance of Mental Illness reports nearly 44 million Americans experience a mental health condition every year—that's about one in five adults. And there is no doubt that everyone in the state of Michigan is living in crisis mode with the spread of COVID-19; schools and businesses closed, social distancing and most of our time spent at home. This can be very stressful. In fact, 36% of Americans say that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a serious impact on their mental health, according to the American Psychiatric Association.

Mental health affects everything—it's our emotional and psychological state of mind impacting how we think, feel and act. But when something feels out of whack, it can pose issues to your day-to-day routine and wellbeing, but unlike illnesses of the rest of the body, mental illness has been swept under the rug for many years because it hasn't been as widely accepted as a serious medical issue.

It's important to remember that everyone will experience anxiety and sadness at some moment in their life. However, when that anxiety and sadness is overwhelming and occurs regularly, a mental illness may be the cause and you should seek help. You don't have to live with

the symptoms; there are resources available to feel better.

While every mental illness is different, here are seven common signs to help determine if you or a loved one may be suffering:

1. Change in feelings or demeanor:

When a person is suffering from a mental illness, they may experience increased feelings of worry, panic, sadness or hopelessness.

2. Loss of interest

They may start avoiding friends, family and activities that used to once bring pleasure.

3. Change in sleeping habits

Sleeping patterns may change to sleeping too much or too little, especially when compared to previous sleep routines.

4. Low energy

This can manifest itself as either sleeping too much or having the inability to carry out everyday activities and tasks such as work or even self-care.

5. Difficulty interacting

Many times people with a mental illness will find it hard to understand or relate to others. This may also present as extreme irritability with others or themselves.

6. Appetite or weight changes

Dietary changes, whether

it is excessive eating or little to no eating, is a large indicator of depression.

7. Uncontrollable emotions

A distinct, rapid mood swing from sadness to happiness, or similar emotions on opposite ends of the spectrum, may be an indicator of mental health struggles.

If any of these symptoms sound familiar, the best thing to do is to ask for help with your family doctor or a mental health resource. By getting help, you can take control of your symptoms and in many cases, recover completely. Here are some options, if you've decided you could use some help:

- **Your health insurance company.** Check with your health plan to see which resources are available. Ask what kind of help is available, what your plan will cover and how to find counselors or behavioral health care providers to meet your needs.
- **Disaster distress helpline.** A 24/7, 365-day-a-year, national hotline dedicated to providing immediate crisis counseling for people who are experiencing emotional distress related to any natural or human-caused disaster. This multilingual and confidential crisis support service is

available to all residents in the United States. Call 1-800-985-5990 or text TalkWithUs to 66746 to connect with a trained crisis counselor.

- **Online or virtual care.** Try an online therapy session through a website such as 7 Cups, an online emotional health service provider. The app enables users to select listeners based on their preferences/experiences and anonymously chat via the platform 24/7. In times of emotional turmoil or stress, it is highly beneficial to talk to someone and this app offers a safe space to do that. Headspace is another free mental health resource for Michiganders during the COVID-19 pandemic offering meditations, at-home workouts and other help for stress and anxiety.

Whatever tools you use for help, take the time to make your mental health a priority. Your mind and health are certainly worth it.

About the Author:

Molly McCoy is the Director of Sales & Client Services, East Region at Priority Health. She is also a mental health first aid instructor and is certified through the National Council for Behavioral Health.

SUPPORT**CONNECT****COPE****MICHIGAN STAY WELL COUNSELING****YOU ARE NOT ALONE**

- It is normal to feel the way you do during increased times of stress. Many people are feeling this way.
- Try to recognize your own stress reactions and behaviors including worry, trouble sleeping, sadness, confusion, irritability, headaches, upset stomach. Some people find themselves consuming more alcohol, prescription/non-prescription drugs or food than they usually do.
- It's OK to have many different feelings, as well as good and bad days, when coping with a disaster like COVID-19.
- **REACH OUT AND TALK TO SOMEONE RIGHT AWAY IF YOU FEEL YOURSELF BECOMING TOO STRESSED TO TAKE GOOD CARE OF YOURSELF OR YOUR FAMILY.**

Visit Michigan.gov/StayWell
for helpful resources

**IF YOU'RE HAVING
SUICIDAL THOUGHTS,
PLEASE CALL THE NATIONAL
SUICIDE PREVENTION LINE,
AVAILABLE 24/7:**

**1-800-273-8255 OR
TEXT THE WORD
"TALK" TO 741741**

**Your LOCAL crisis &
suicide lines are:**

Montcalm Care Network
800-377-0974

The Right Door for Hope,
Recovery and Wellness
888-527-1790

Avoid Substance Abuse Temptation

The coronavirus pandemic has been a time of disruption, uncertainty and transition. Millions of Americans have endured hardships over the past year including job loss, financial strains, grief and loss. Among those impacted either directly or indirectly by the pandemic, the most vulnerable individuals include those with underlying mental health issues, substance use disorders and/or individuals in recovery.

Obstacles that have resulted from the pandemic can feel daunting for many people. Constant worry about our safety and security can feel like a lingering sense of anxiety or a feeling of being “burned out.” Burnout can also look like symptoms of anxiety and depression. Many people may turn to substances to cope with the stressors or to find an “escape.” It is important to be aware of the risks that are associated with substance use during the current pandemic.

Considering the social distancing guidelines, social isolation poses a risk for opioid overdoses because it's less likely someone will be around to help in the event of an overdose.

Another risk factor to consider is health and safety. The use of substances can weaken the body's natural defenses to help fight off infections. Certain substances such as alcohol, opioids and tobacco can impact recovery from COVID-19 because these substances directly impact the lungs and the respiratory system. Avoiding the use of substances can improve our

immune response to fight off illness.

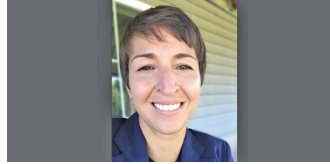
Lastly, individuals with substance use disorders are more likely to experience homelessness and incarceration, which create additional barriers for social distancing and overall health and safety risks.

The coronavirus pandemic has taken the sense of “normalcy” out of our daily lives. Although this may be a time of social distancing, you and your loved ones are not alone. Support groups and counseling resources are available within the community to assist with navigating addiction and mental health disorders. If you have any questions or concerns or need help finding resources, please call The Right Door for Hope, Recovery and Wellness at 616-527-1790; or Montcalm Care Network at 989-831-7520.

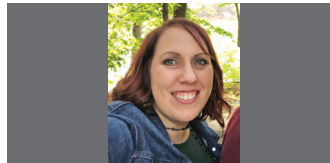
Together, we will get through this.

Tips for relapse prevention:

- **HALT (Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired):** These can be all too common within the current pandemic. Self-awareness and self-care are critical to identifying and addressing these needs and emotions.
- **Stay connected:** Maintain social and community connection. Reach out to your sponsor for support. Support group meetings can currently be accessed online and/or in-person, depending on the location. View the websites for Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous programs to find more



ASHLEY LAPRISE
LMSW, CAADC
The Right Door



LISA LUBENOW
LMSW, CAADC
The Right Door

information. Other options include In the Rooms, SMART Recovery, Sober Grid and private Facebook groups. Search for ways to incorporate meaning and purpose into your daily life, such as volunteering, paying it forward, etc.

- **Manage grief:** Several losses may occur throughout the pandemic including job loss, loss of a loved one, loss of housing, loss of routine. Grief can feel like a rollercoaster of emotions. It is especially critical during times of grief to stay connected with social supports during a time of social distancing - in a safe manner.
- **Manage health and safety:** Create a plan to help recognize and address any potential threats to your health and recovery. Harm reduction strategies are also important to consider and can be found on the CDC website.

Resources:

Mental Health and Substance Abuse Counseling:

Alcoholics Anonymous

aa.org
800-821-3014

Belle Tower Group

Substance/mental health counseling
Greenville | 616-835-9292

Community Hope

Substance/mental health counseling
Greenville | 616-225-8220

Four Health Family Resource Center

Substance/mental health counseling
Saranac | 616-642-6466

Mid State Health Network

Substance/mental health counseling
Ionia County | 844-405-3094

Montcalm Alano Club

Self help/support for substance use
Greenville | 616-894-2227

Montcalm Care Network

Substance/mental health counseling and treatment
Stanton | 989-831-7520

The Right Door for Hope

Substance/mental health/wellness counseling
Ionia | 616-527-1790

Transitions Counseling

Mental health counseling
Greenville | 616-754-9420

Two Rivers Counseling

Substance/mental health counseling
Portland | 517-647-4747

Wedgewood Christian Services

Substance/mental health counseling
Greenville | 616-942-2110

Viewpointe Counseling

Substance/mental health counseling
Ionia | 616-523-6537

ALICE Families **Forced** to make **Difficult** Decisions

More than 40 million adults and one in five children in the United States suffer from a mental health disorder. The COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic recession have negatively affected the mental health for many and created new barriers for people already suffering from mental illness and substance use disorders. The most pressing need facing communities is the lack of mental health providers. More federal resources are needed to address the capacity of local communities to respond to the continuing mental health and substance use disorder needs.

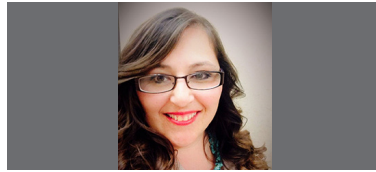
ALICE families are those that are **A**sset **L**imited, **I**ncome **C**onstrained and **E**mloyed. They do not earn enough to afford basic necessities. For these low-income families, every day is a test, but on this test the choices are all impossible and one wrong answer can have devastating results: Pay the rent or pick up a prescription? Pay auto insurance or keep the electricity on? These families make up nearly 50 percent of households in our local communities.

Families making less than \$60,000 a year for a family of four have increased health needs, but it is often harder for them to access and pay for health care.

The most common way to save on health care costs is to forgo preventative visits. Recent research shows a direct correlation between unmet basic needs – such as do we buy groceries or live without water and heat – and poor health.

In any given year, one in five adults in the U.S. experience mental illness and 4 percent of adults experience serious mental illness, yet treatment rates remain exceedingly low. When mental health issues go untreated, they become more serious and lead to

If you or someone you know is in need of help, please contact 2-1-1.



TERRILEGG
Executive Director

United Way Montcalm-Ionia Counties

other poor outcomes for ALICE families, including reduced school and work attendance and decreased quality of life.

According to the National Center for Children in Poverty, the social and educational consequences of untreated mental illness in children and teens are severe. Nationally, 44 percent of youth with mental health problems drop out of school; 50 percent of children in the child welfare system have mental health issues; and 67 to 70 percent of youth in the juvenile justice system have a diagnosable mental health disorder.

When ALICE families forgo health care, it impacts us all. Untreated mental health issues increase ER costs, acute care costs, they add to caseloads in the criminal and juvenile justice systems and they cause a strain on educational institutions and employers.

As we continue our efforts to recover and rebuild, all Americans at every stage in their life must have healthcare coverage that is accessible, affordable and adequate. We ask you to join with us to help educate members of Congress on these critical policy priorities and what they would mean for the families in our community.

Advocate for Change

Email, call or write your representative in Washington D.C.

U.S. Rep. Peter Meijer

Email: Visit meijer.house.gov for email form.
Call: (616) 451-8383 (Grand Rapids office) or
Write: Grand Rapids office
110 Michigan St NW, Ste 460
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Website: meijer.house.gov

U.S. Rep. John Moolenaar

Email: Visit moolenaar.house.gov for email form.
Call: (989) 631-2552 (Midland office)
Write: Midland office
200 E. Main St., Suite 230
Midland, MI 48640
Website: moolenaar.house.gov

U.S. Sen. Gary Peters

Email: Visit www.peters.senate.gov for email form.
Call: (616) 233-9150 (Grand Rapids office)
Write: Grand Rapids office
Gerald R. Ford Federal Building
110 Michigan St. NW, Suite 720
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
Website: www.peters.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow

Email: Visit www.stabenow.senate.gov for email form.
Call: (616) 975-0052 (Grand Rapids office)
Write: Grand Rapids office
3280 E. Beltline Court NE, Suite 400
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
Website: www.stabenow.senate.gov

One of our basic needs is connection to one another

Greenville church provides community, inside and outside its walls

A chalkboard wall downstairs at the Greenville First Church of God proclaims “Your Story Matters.”

They aren’t just words, said Pastor Matt Stone. The phrase is central to



KAREN BOTA

kbota@thedailynews.cc

how the congregation — or “the group,” as he calls it — welcomes all who are looking for a community to be part of.

“(Churches) expect them to come in and sit down and be like us. Without listening to them, how will we ever understand?” Stone asked. “How do we create a space for that shared experience, with more opportunities for honest discussion and listening in our churches?”

In “unique” times like the coronavirus pandemic,

Continues on page 19



Pastor Matthew Stone of Greenville First Church of God packages gallons of milk into boxes to be distributed to families in need during a food distribution event at Greenville High School last March. — DN Photo | Cory Smith



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WWW.COMMUNITYHOPEHOUSE.ORG

Continued from page 18

when routines and rhythms of life have been interrupted, even more people are looking for a community to feel at home in, he said.

“One of our basic needs is connection to one another,” Stone said. “So many people in our community are looking for that ... looking to belong someplace.”

One of those places where connections are made by the First Church of God is the church’s weekly mobile food banks. At the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic and subsequent shut-downs and food insecurity, Stone and his group, with the help of the Greenville Area Community Foundation and United Way, began offering eight food banks a week, serving 150 families and close to 500 people.

The people in line, and those serving them, have come to think of each other as their community, whether or not anyone ever steps inside the church facility.

“The food truck reminds people that we do care,” he said.

First Church of God meets people where they are and welcomes them in.

“We need you to be part of our larger community,” Stone said. “It doesn’t matter what your story is. We want you to come and be a part.”

No one church is going to be the perfect fit for everyone, and Stone knows that. He and his wife Kristin are lucky, he said. They felt the inclusion they were seeking when they found the First Church of God 11 years ago.

“We just kind of sensed: You belong, these are your people, they’re loving and accepting of who you are and what you’re about in welcoming folks in,” he said.

“Most people genuinely care about others, but consistently and regularly showing up actually demonstrates that people matter.”

Pastor Matt Stone



Volunteers box up food to be distributed to families in need during a food distribution event, coordinated by Greenville Church of God, at Greenville High School, held last March. — DN Photo | Cory Smith

To him, being welcoming means providing hospitality. But hospitality is more than smiling, or waving from a seat in the pew or coffee hour.

“When someone enters your world, you want it to be about them,” he said. “We want to create an environment where what we actually say is experienced by those who would be with us — actually spending time with people and taking them as they are. We’re all a little messy.”

For those who might be looking for a church community to be part of, Stone has some advice.

- **Take time to inventory what you want in a church:** How far are you

willing to drive to get there and does the worship time meet your schedule? Do you prefer a traditional or more modern service? Are you looking for opportunities for outreach and service?

- **Select some churches to visit:** Research more about them on their websites and even attend a service on Zoom or Facebook Live, as during the pandemic many have shifted partly or totally to online venues. Ask a friend whose opinion you trust for a recommendation.
- **Visit the church:** Attend some services — Stone suggests multiple weeks, which will provide a better

assessment, unless you get an immediate gut feeling that it isn’t a safe space for you. “Four weeks would give a vibe for what changes week to week and to see if that lines up with what you value and desire,” he said. “Be willing to seek out the pastor, or some leader and maybe have a sit-down to ask a few open, honest questions based on your values and desires and where the church is on some of those things.”

Even if a church is “a perfect fit”, it’s not going to be perfect. Church communities are like families. There are good days and bad days and people disagree, said Stone.

“For us the goal isn’t to be a homogenous bubble, but to help each other to become like-minded people, not look alike,” he added.

First Church of God isn’t “our private club,” and caring about the church community and the larger community is “our footprint,” Stone said. Everyone is welcome there, whether they attend church services regularly or not at all, whether they donate money or not.

You’ll know the right church community for you when you experience it, Stone said. For him, that includes honesty, integrity, and the experience of true hospitality, which allows people to feel that church is a safe place to bring their full selves just as they are. It’s something Stone wants for himself, too.

“Most people genuinely care about others, but consistently and regularly showing up actually demonstrates that people matter,” he said. “I would encourage the local community to embody this, to be this. We’re all trying to do our piece.”

Pandemic *Hits* Seniors **Hard**

Connection, Routine and Exercise **Key to Getting Through It**

The Covid-19 Pandemic has been difficult for all of us, but it has had a disproportionate effect on seniors. We know that the virus poses a greater health risk to those who are older, but the trickle down effects impact older adults in other ways, too: health issues because of changes in the types of foods they are eating due to changes in the availability of foods, limited exercise due to isolating at home more, and reduced cognitive stimulation that comes with limited social interactions.

In addition to the direct health implications of the virus and these changes, there also is a crisis of loneliness

and social isolation among our seniors. While this is not a new issue among older adults, it is exacerbated by the pandemic because the steps needed to stay safe and healthy are in direct conflict with socialization and can be isolating.

Many of the solutions for increasing social interactions during the pandemic and even connecting with health care providers include enhanced use of technologies. But this population was not raised with computers and technology, so they may need help setting up appointments or connecting to online events. Phone calls, handwritten notes and visits through windows are great

options for connecting with seniors.

If you are a senior citizen, here are some suggestions to help get through this pandemic:

- **Know you are not alone and that you can actually help others:** Call a friend just to say “hello” and see how they’re doing; If you see someone walking the neighborhood, take a moment to wave and even have a conversation (social distanced of course).
- **Organize your day:** Identify things you can do that might be different for you such as driving a dif-

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RYAN DRYER

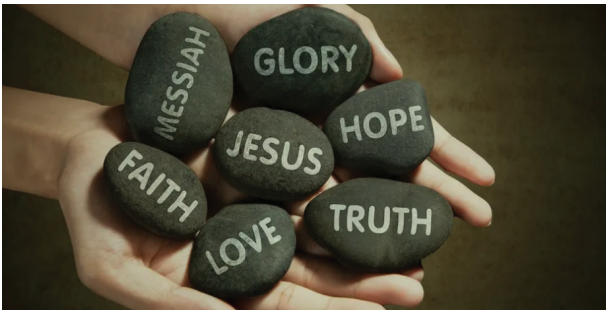
Director
Montcalm County
Commission on Aging



JULIE DOWLING

Outpatient/Special
Services Supervisor
The Right Door for Hope,
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Matthew's House Christian Thrift Store

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616-841-6050

HOURS:
MONDAY 11 am - 6 pm
TUESDAY - FRIDAY 9 am - 6 pm
SATURDAY 9 am - 5 pm
CLOSED SUNDAY

277236

We're here to help the senior citizens of Montcalm County maintain their **health, dignity, independence and well-being**

- Home Delivered Meals
- Transportation
- In-home Services
- Medicare/Medicaid Assistance
- Medical Equipment Needs



Contact our office for assistance:
989.831.7476

277237

Continued from page 20

ferent way to the grocery store, doing a puzzle, dancing, reading a book.

- **Limit your TV time:** It's important to take a break from the headlines and find other ways to stimulate your brain.
- **Exercise physically:** Create your own exercise program. For example, walk around the house five times, exercise your arms by lifting a can of veggies 10 times, dance to music, try online chair yoga.
- **Exercise mentally:** Start a special project, set yourself up to learn something new at least once a week. Color a picture, do a crossword puzzle or wordsearch, create something to give away to someone else - a picture, a card, a poem, cookies; Listen to books on tape, available at your library for free.

Caregivers and neighbors of seniors can help by:

- **Making sure their basic needs are met:** Go beyond surface questions. For example, instead of asking if they have food, ask what they had to eat today so you can better assess if they are eating balanced and nutritional foods.
- **Offering to help:** Ask if you can get their mail, take out the trash, pick up prescription refills.
- **Having a backup plan:** Make sure those who are dependent on a caregiver have a backup plan if that person needs to quarantine or cannot help one day.



Caregiving can be intense, especially with the added stress of a pandemic. If you are a caregiver, it's important that you take good care of yourself:

- **Find a caregiver support group:** There are many available virtually or find someone who you can talk to about your day.
- **Exercise:** It's a great stress reliever.
- **Eat healthy foods:** They help keep your immune system strong.
- **Balance caregiving with taking time to care for yourself:** Find respite options in your community. Reach out to family and friends and ask for help.

Helping to protect our students' mental health and give hope and calm through any of life's storms!!!

When it comes to mental health services, Belding High School has our students covered. We offer a wide variety of programs to protect, enhance, and care for the mental health needs of all of our students. Interested in learning more? Please contact:

The PASS Room:

Tommy Hickey hickeyt@bas-k12.org

The BeNice. Club:

Angela Wood wooda@bas-k12.org

The Gender/Sexuality Alliance:

Alaina Leo lea@bas-k12.org

BHS Counseling Department & B Well Club:

Jodi Edwards edwardsj@bas-k12.org

The Listening Room:

George Rousseau rousseag@bas-k12.org



Resources:

Helpful Senior Resources:

Ionia County Commission on Aging | 616-527-5365

- Meals on Wheels, in-home services, transportation, virtual wellness classes

Montcalm County Commission on Aging | 989-831-7476

- Home delivered meals, in-home services, medical transportation to those aged 60 and above in Montcalm County.

EightCAP | 616-754-9315

- Foster grandparents and senior companion programs

2-1-1 | Call 2-1-1

- Connection to nonprofit and government resources

Alzheimer's Association | 800-272-3900

- Support groups, education programs, care consultation

Clay Street Center in Greenville | 616-835-9080

- Adult day care center

Just Like Home in Ionia | 616-523-4310

- Adult day care center

The Right Door | 616-527-1790

- Mental health needs

Montcalm Care Network | 989-831-7520

- Mental health needs

Movie Shows Fallout of Pressure and Stress to Succeed

Community Panel Conversation Helps Explain It

"Coming Up For Air" is a movie that follows the story of Anna Russell (played by Deborah Staples) and her son Stan (played by Chase Yi), who is a straight-A college student and high diving champion trying to earn a spot on the men's Olympic diving team. As happens so often, the pressure and stress to succeed begin to take their toll and Stan begins to unravel, withdrawing into himself with potentially tragic consequences.

This movie is a family drama that highlights the importance of mental health care by showing the pressures that are put on teenagers to succeed and on parents to cope. **Montcalm Care Network is sponsoring FREE access to this movie and a panel discussion during the week of March 12-18.**

"Coming Up For Air" is an award winning film that has sparked a national conversation about the significant role caregivers play helping family, friends and patients recover from mental illness.

To register for this FREE event, go to

www.mcnfreemovieevent.eventbrite.com. Once registered, you will receive the link and passcode to watch the movie at your convenience during the week of March 12-18. Then you can attend the Zoom panel discussion on March 18 from 5:30-6:30 p.m.

FREE
Movie Link
& Zoom
Panel
Discussion



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WWW.THEGREENMEDICINESHOP.COM

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

If you need help with any life circumstance that is affecting your mental health but don't know where to turn, call 2-1-1 for guidance. Help is available 24/7, 365 days of the year.

EMPLOYMENT:

West Michigan Works:
800-285-9675

HEALTH:

Montcalm Area Health Center:
Provides sliding scale health care | 616-225-9650

Mid-Michigan Health Department:
Health services currently focused primarily on managing the spread of COVID-19 | 989-831-5237

HOUSING:

EightCAP:
Can provide housing and homeless assistance to those in need along with a variety of referrals and resources
Homeless hotline 866-754-9315 ext. 3335.

Have Mercy:
Provides interim housing for men, women, couples and families
616-225-8055

Randy's House:
Personalized recovery residences for those with substance use disorders | 616-498-2464

RAVE:
A womens shelter for victims of domestic violence, rape, sexual assault | 800-720-7233

HUMAN SERVICES:

Department of Human Services:
Protective services, emergency food/resources, transportation, Medicaid/benefit assistance.
Montcalm County: 989-831-8400; Ionia County 616-527-5100

The Salvation Army:
Helps with emergency needs | 855-929-1640

OTHER COMMUNITY SERVICES:

Alpha Family Services:
Free and confidential family planning services | 616-225-2265

TAX PREPARATION ASSISTANCE:

United Way Montcalm-Ionia Counties:
Volunteer Income Tax Assistance and referrals to local agencies for other needs | 616-794-9840

VETERANS SERVICES:

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs:
Connects veterans with services and benefits | 844-698-2311

Veterans Crisis Line: Connects veterans and their families in crisis with qualified responders | 800-273-8255, press 1



TRANSITIONS: COUNSELING SERVICES



Sue Ellen Pabst Shannon Glaser Lindsay Schmidt Nick Comai Nicole Fox



Phil Millerov Tracy Zavala Susan Colombo Nikki Vega Lori Crossman Lauren Presutti

616-754-9420

WWW.TRANSITIONSCS.COM

This publication was made possible by the following community partners who understand and believe in the value of Help & Hope:



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